

**Comments on TransForum's work on the  
Fitness for purpose of definitions and indicators  
- as summarised in the discussion paper (v 19 Oct 2006)**

**My apologies, I'm on a parallel project meeting.  
But I'll be happy to respond or expand when I've arrived.**

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## These comments shall challenge WP3

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- I would like to challenge the outcome of WP3 by a few claims.
- These claims are of principle nature and also discussed among the participants of e.g. the on-going COST 356 action „Towards the definition of a measurable environmentally sustainable transport“
- Notably I've benefitted from discussions with Henrik Gudmundsson, DTF.
- I also draw on own work about indicators e.g.
  - for the environmental impact of transport,
  - for sustainable transport (both for the German Federal Environment Agency),
  - for the Mid-term review of the EU Transport White Paper (ASSESS).and from attending TransForum 1 and 2 meetings.
  
- There are a few technical remarks on the indicators in the second part.



## Claim 1: Indicators are subjective elements

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Indicators represent the **agreement** of a group on **important issues!**

➤ e.g. on a sustainable transport policy in Europe.

as...

- a) ...indicators shall capture a few aspects only (not map everything),
- b) ...judgements on importance are always subjective  
(you cannot avoid subjectivity, but make it transparent),
- c) ... judgements depend on the actors (the group),

**If this is true =>  
indicators will always need convincing!**



## TransForum WP3

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- a) OK, WP3 tried to be selective in the number of indicators.
- b) The selection in favour or against some indicator is not well documented.
- c) There is not sufficient evidence and argumentation given to convince non-participants (=outside the group of TransForum participants).

### Proposal:

- Argue the pros and cons of each indicator.





## Claim 2: There is not one, but many purposes for indicators

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- Indicators shall be **useful** for policy making  
(not just interesting information)
- Hence they have to respond to the needs of the user(s).
- The purposes in policy making depend e.g. on
  - policy stage: preparation, assessment, implementation, evaluation afterwards;
  - policy level: from single measure to comprehensive strategy?
  - intention: Monitoring? Analysis? Performance measurement? ...
- There are diverse – and diffuse – users!

**If this is true =>  
one set of indicators can never cater all purposes – and  
maybe not all users!**



## TransForum WP3

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- The purpose (i.e. the intended or imagined application) of the indicators is not well defined. How can then „the fitness for purpose“ be assessed?

Alternatively: It is not argued how one set can cater for all purposes.

- Who is the user?
- How shall the indicators be used?

### Proposal:

- Define / describe the purpose of the indicators here.
- E.g. describe different classes of indicators for different purposes / user groups / policy phases ?



## Claim 3: Process as important as product

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- If indicators represent the agreement of a group on important issues, then **use indicators as tools for discussion – don't consider them as their end.**
- If the discussion, i.e. the clarification, common understanding and mutual agreement is so important, **then concentrate on the process as much as on the product!**

### Recommendations:

- **Analyse the process of (transport) policy making better – and the potential place of scientific information, and the place of indicators.**
- **Maintain fora for discussing – analysing – understanding European transport policy and transport research.**



## More technical remarks on the WP3 indicators

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### Good:

- Linked to objectives
- Limited in number ⇔ reduction of complexity / overview.

### Problematic:

- Has TransForum **proven** that these indicators are
  - complete, comprehensive, fully operational, without mutual overlap and unambiguously linked to an objective?
  - Is accessibility really equal to travel time? From where to where? Does accessibility not relate to options in space?
- Why have you **selected** PM emissions, why not NO<sub>x</sub>?
  - By the way: PM<sub>1</sub>, PM<sub>2.5</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub>??? Soot???
  - Exhaust emissions only or including the fuel/electricity provision?
  - Including or without secondary aerosols???
  - If yes, then you cannot mean emissions, but concentrations?  
If you mean concentrations, how do you determine the transport share only?





## Technical remarks on the WP3 indicators (cont.)

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### Problematic:

- What is the **objective** for passenger / freight / vehicle kilometers?  
More, equal or less?
  - Without an unambiguous link, the indicator cannot be interpreted.
- Why is there no indicator for the **fragmentation of land**?
  - Unfragmented land is a scarce resource and transport is the biggest pressure.
- Why no indicator on **total energy consumption** or energy efficiency of transport?
  - Energy conservation (not only fuel substitution) is an explicit policy target.
- Why only indicators for motorised transport?
  - This gives a hidden - and therefore particularly dangerous – bias.

**Technically, there are many open questions.**

**That these indicators are the key transport indicators is not convincing.**



## Commented further reading

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Discussing the role and place of (environmental) indicators for transport:

**COST 356** – „Towards the definition of a measurable environmentally sustainable transport“

<http://cost356.inrets.fr/>

For a comprehensive indicator set for the assessment of European transport policy:

**De Ceuster G., et al. 2005:** “ASSESS - Assessment of the contribution of the TEN and other transport policy measures to the mid-term implementation of the White Paper on the European Transport Policy for 2010’.” Final Report to the European Commission, DG TREN. Brussels Oct 2005.

[ec.europa.eu/transport/white\\_paper/mid\\_term\\_revision/assess\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/transport/white_paper/mid_term_revision/assess_en.htm)

For a proposal of environmental indicators for transport:

**Borken, J. 2006:** “Can TERM determine the environmental impact of transport? – Reflections on a core set of transport indicators” Invited talk at the TERM Annual Workshop, European Environment Agency, Copenhagen, 21 June 2006.

[http://elib.dlr.de/44171/01/Borken\\_TERM\\_CoreSet.pdf](http://elib.dlr.de/44171/01/Borken_TERM_CoreSet.pdf)